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Message Text

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SUBJECT: TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS BRIEFING ON POSTPONEMENT
OF JOINT COMMITTEE MEETINGS

REF; MOSCOW 4059

1. AS PER EMBASSY'S REQUEST IN REFERENCED CABLE, FULL
TEXT OF PERTINENT PORTIONS OF DEPARTMENT'S PRESS BRIEFING
TRANSCRIPT RELATING TO OIL NEGOTIATIONS AND MEETING
POSTPONEMENTS FOLLOWS:

DEPARTMENT OF STATE BRIEFING FOR PRESS, RADIO
AND TELEVISION NEWS, TUESDAY, MARCH 16 (ON THE RECORD
UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED).

MR. FUNSETH: GOOD AFTERNOON, I HAVE A FEW ANNOUNCEMENTS:
I HAVE A STATEMENT, AN ANNOUNCEMENT, I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE
ON US - SOVIET OIL TALKS, THE TEXT OF WHICH MRS. WEYLAND
IS NOW PASSING OUT.

QUOTE SINCE JANUARY 26, US AND SOVIET DELEGATIONS, HEADED
BY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE CHARLES W. ROBINSON ON THE
US SIDE AND BY DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN TRADE NIKOLAI
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G. OSIPOV ON THE SOVIET SIDE, HAVE BEEN NEGOTIATING AN
OIL AGREEMENT.
"UNDER THE TERMS OF A LETTER OF INTENT SIGNED LAST OCT
20 BY UNDER SECRETARY ROBINSON AND SOVIET MINISTER OF

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FOREIGN TRADE NIKOLAI PATOLICEV, THE ANNUAL SALE OF 10 MILLION TONS OF SOVIET CRUDE OIL AND REFINED PRODUCTS OVER A FIVE-YEAR PERIOD WAS CONTEMPLATED.

'THE LETTER ALSO ENVISIONED THAT A PORTION OF THE OIL AND REFINED PRODUCTS WOULD BE TRANSPORTED TO THE UNITED STATES ON US-FLAG TANKERS WHICH CARRY GRAIN TO THE SOVIET UNION.

"THE TWO SIDES HAVE NOT YET BEEN ABLE TO AGREE ON A FORMULA FOR SHIPPING RATES CONSIDERED MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL TO THEIR ECONOMIC INTERESTS AND HAVE AGREED TO RECESS THE NEGOTIATIONS IN ORDER TO AFFORD THEIR GOVERNMENTS FURTHER TIME IN WHICH TO CONSIDER THEIR POSITIONS.

,THEY EXPECT TO RESUME NEGOTIATIONS IN THE NEAR FUTURE.;

Q. BOB, IS THIS BEING RELEASED IN MOSCOW, DO YOU KNOW?

A. I DO NOT KNOW.

Q. AND, CAN I ASK YOU A LOGIC QUESTION, PERHAPS? DO YOU RELATE THIS IN ANY WAY TO ANY OTHER EVENTS IN US-SOVIET RELATIONS?

A. NO.

Q. NO?

A. NO.

Q. YOU THINK THIS STANDS ON ITS OWN?

A. RIGHT.

Q. THERE IS NO LINKAGE HERE, IS THERE?

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A. THERE IS NO LINKAGE.

Q. THIS IS NOT A SIGNAL, OR PART OF A SIGNAL TO THE SOVIETS THAT WE ARE DISTRESSED OVER THEIR BEHAVIOR IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD?

A. NO. THE RECESS WAS FOR THE REASON STATED.

Q. THE TALKS HAVE COLLAPSED?

A. NO. THEY HAVE RECESSED.
Q. OH.

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A. THERE IS A DIFFERENCE.

Q. COULD YOU DESCRIBE IT A BETTER WAY? YOU SAID THEY HAVEN'T AGREED ON A FORMULA FOR SHIPPING RATES.

A. YES.

Q. HAVE THEY AGREED ON A FORMULA FOR THE PRICE OF OIL?

A. I DO NOT BELIEVE IT WAS EVER CONSIDERED FEASIBLE THAT WE WOULD ESTABLISH A SPECIFIC PRICE FORMULA BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AGENCIES. THE QUESTION OF THE PRICE OF ANY OIL IMPORTED BY A US PURCHASER WOULD HAVE BEEN LEFT TO THE SOVIET EXPORTING COMPANY AND THE US PURCHASER TO NEGOTIATE.

Q. WAS IT YOUR UNDERSTANDING THAT THEY WANTED TO RETURN TO THE OPEC PRICE?

A. PARDON ME.

Q. WAS IT YOUR UNDERSTANDING THAT THEY WANTED TO CHARGE THE OPEC PRICE?

A. I HAVE NOT BEEN BRIEFED ON THE PRICE DISCUSSIONS. THE PRINCIPAL REASON IS THE FACT THAT WE WERE UNABLE TO REACH AGREEMENT ON THE SHIPPING RATES.

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Q. THERE IS GENERALLY A FAIRLY STANDARD FORMULA CHARGED BY CARRIERS ALL AROUND THE WORLD. WHY SHOULD THERE BE A SPECIAL SHIPPING RATE FORMULATED FOR THIS PARTICULAR DEAL?

A. IN WORKING OUT AGREED SHIPPING RATES, LARS, I THINK WHAT WE ARE TRYING TO DO IS TO MAKE POSSIBLE THE PARTICIPATION OF US FLAGSHIPS OF VARIOUS EFFICIENT SIZES WHICH ARE NOW, OR COULD BE, ENGAGED IN HAULING US GRAIN TO THE SOVIET UNION. AND WE WERE NOT ABLE TO REACH AN AGREEMENT ON SHIPPING RATES FOR ALL OF THESE SHIPS. BUT BECAUSE WE EXPECT TO RESUME NEGOTIATIONS IN THE NEAR FUTURE, IT IS NOT EASY, OR IT IS NOT POSSIBLE FOR ME, TO GO INTO TOO MUCH DETAIL OVER THE DIFFERENCES WE HAVE.

Q. YOU SAID AGREEMENT REGARDING SHIPPING RATES FOR "ALL" OF THESE SHIPS -- AN AGREEMENT WAS REACHED IN REGARD --

A. ALL EFFICIENT SIZES.
Q. BUT AGREEMENT WAS REACHEDIN REGARD TO RATES FOR OTHERS? "SOME" SHIPS?

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A. I AM NOT ABLE TO GO INTO THAT.

Q. IN OTHER WORDS, THAT DOESN'T APPLY? YOU WEREN'T ABLE TO REACH --

A. IT IS THE OVERALL PROBLEM THAT WE WERE NOT ABLE TO RESOLVE.

Q. THESE TALKS SURFACED WHEN THE GRAIN DEALS WERE BEING MADE PUBLIC, AND THE TWO SEEMED TO BE RELATE;, BY SOME AMERICAN OFFICIALS, AND CERTAINLY IN THE PUBLIC'S MIND. IS IT NOW UNRELATED TO GRAIN DEALS WITH THE SOVIET UNION?

A. NO.

Q. DO THEY OWE US THIS?

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A. PARDON ME?

Q. I SAY, IS THIS UNRELATED TO OUR GRAIN TALKS AT THIS POINT?

A. YES. THIS IS A SEPARATE NEGOTIATION.

Q. HAS THERE EVER BEEN A RELATIONSHIP, REALLY?

A. I THINK THE RELATIONSHIP WAS THAT INITIALLY THERE WERE PARALLEL TALKS GOING ON IN MOSCOW, BOTH ON THE QUESTION OF GRAIN AS WELL AS ON THE QUESTION OF OIL.

Q. SO THEY WERE PARALLEL, BUT NOT NECESSARILY RELATED IN THE FIRST PLACE?

A. THAT IS RIGHT. THERE IS ANOTHER RELATION IN THAT WE WERE HOPING, AND WE STILL ARE WORKING ON THE AGREEMENTS, SO THAT THE SHIPS THAT HAUL THE GRAIN COULD RETURN WITH OIL, AT LEAST SOME OF THEM.

Q. BOB, WHY DO YOU EXPECT THAT THESE TALKS WILL RESUME IN THE NEAR FUTURE? I THINK YOU SAID IN THE "VERY NEAR FUTURE" AS YOU WERE DISCUSSING THIS THING --

Q. IS THE UNITED STATES CONSIDERING CHANGING ITS POSITION?

A. NO, WE ARE GOING BACK TO BOTH -- AS THE STATEMENT SAYS -- BOTH DELEGATIONS ARE RETURNING TO THEIR RESPEC-TIVE GOVERNMENTS TO REVIEW THE NEGOTIATIONS AND THEN BOTH

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DELEGATIONS AGREED T;AT THEY WOULD BE RESUMING NEGOTIA-
TIONS.

A. BOB, IS THIS RELATED TO THE CURRENT REASSESSMENT OF
US POLICY CONCERNING US-SOVIET COOPERATION IN A RANGE OF
ISSUES -- ENERGY, HOUSING, ECONOMICS?

A. NO, IT IS NOT.

Q. WELL, WILL YOU TELL US WHAT THE US POLICY IS IN THE
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SLOWDOWN ON THE OTHER RELATIONSHIPS?

A. SPECIFICALLY WHAT?

Q. THE ENERGY CONFERENCE.

A. YOU DO NOT MEAN THE "ENERGY CONFERENCE" YOU MEAN
THE "JOINT ENERGY COMMITTEE MEETING?,

Q. YES.

A. WELL, THAT IS ENTIRELY SEPARATE FROM THE OIL TALKS.
DATES FOR MEETINGS OF THREE BILATERAL COMMISSIONS OR
COMMITTEES HAVE BEEN POSTPONED, OR DATES HAVE NOT BEEN
SET. ONE IS THE JOINT US-SOVIET COMMERCIAL COMMISSION,
THIS YEAR'S MEETING OF THAT COMMISSION HAD NOT AS YET
BEEN SCHEDULED. IT MAY, PERHAPS, BE HELD IN THE SECOND
HALF OF THE YEAR. AS FOR THE OTHER TWO, THE JOINT ENERGY
COMMITTEE -- WE WERE PLANNING TO HAVE THAT IN MID-MARCH,
ABOUT THIS TIME -- AND THEN THERE IS ANOTHER, A THIRD,
BILATERAL COMMITTEE -- THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON HOUSING
AND OTHER CONSTRUCTION-- WE WERE PLANNING TO HAVE THAT
IN MAY. WE HAVE DECIDED TO DELAY THE HOLDINGS OF THE
MEETINGS OF THESE TWO GROUPS. THE REASON WE HAVE DECID-
ED TO --

Q. HOUSING, AND ENERGY?

A. RIGHT. THE FIRST ONE HAD NOT BEEN SCHEDULED -- WE
HAD NOT SCHEDULED AS YET THE DATE FOR THE JOINT US-SOVIET
COMMERCIAL COMMISSION. THE OTHER TWO, WE HAD SOME DATES,
BUT WE HAVE DECIDED TO DELAY THOSE. THE ANSWER TO YOUR
ORIGINAL QUESTION AS TO WHY WE ARE POSTPONING OR DELAYING
THE HOLDING OF THESE MEETINGS -- THE REASON IS THAT IN
THE LIGHT OF THE SITUATION IN ANGOLA, WE FELT WE COULD
NOT CONDUCT OUR BUSINESS WITH THE SOVIET UNION AS USUAL.

Q. WHEN DID THIS --

A. MAY I JUST ADD ANOTHER THOUGHT? THE REASON WE FEEL

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THIS WAY IS THAT ACTIONS SUCH AS THOSE OF THE SOVIET
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UNION IN ANGOLA, HAVE THEIR PENALTIES. THEREFORE, WE DECIDED NOT TO PROCEED WITH THE MEETINGS OF THESE THREE JOINT BODIES.

Q. BOB IF YOU ARE SAYING THAT IT'S A FORM OF PENALIZING THE SOVIET UNION, AREN'T YOU SAYING THAT THESE AGREEMENTS ARE TILTED TO THE SOVIETS' BENEFIT IN THE FIRST PLACE?

A. NO, NOT AT ALL.

Q. THEN HOW ARE YOU PENALIZING THEM BY HOLDING BACK SOMETHING THAT IS MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL? THEN YOU ARE PENALIZING YOURSELF AND THAT WOULD BE MASOCHISM.

A. I WILL JUST GO BACK TO MY FIRST POINT: BECAUSE OF THE SOVIET ACTIONS IN ANGOLA, WE JUST DO NOT BELIEVE WE CAN CONDUCT OUR RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION AS USUAL--

Q. I UNDERSTOOD YOUR FIRST POINT. I GUESS I DON'T UNDERSTAND, "HAVE THEIR PENALTIES." WHO IS BEING PENALIZED?

A. -- IT HAS ITS FALLOUT ON THE WHOLE --

A. WHEN DOES THE --

A. -- THE WHOLE U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONSHIP.

Q. WHEN DID YOU COME TO THIS CONCLUSION?

Q. EXCUSE ME, I DIDN'T QUITE HEAR THAT LAST. "FALLOUT ON THE"?

A. THE WHOLE U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONSHIP --

Q. HAS THERE BEEN A FALLOUT --

Q. -- HAS THERE BEEN A FALLOUT OF THE U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONSHIP -- I BELIEVE --

Q. ON THE U.S.-SOVIET --
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A. THE U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONSHIP.

Q. WHEN DID THIS -- WHEN WAS THIS DECISION REACHED, MR. FUNSETH?

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A. I DO NOT HAVE THE DATE OF THE DECISION.

Q. WELL, PERHAPS YOU COULD LOOK INTO THAT?

A. O.K.

Q. BECAUSE AFTER ALL, THE PURPORTED SOVIET ACTIONS IN ANGOLA WOULD APPEAR TO HAVE REACHED BACK QUITE A WAYS.

A. YES.

Q. SO THE QUESTION WOULD BE: WHICH ACTIONS AND WHEN? IN OTHER WORDS, WAS IT A CERTAIN LEVEL OF WAR MATERIEL? WAS IT FERRYING CUBAN TROOPS?

Q. WAS IT WINNING?

A. I WILL CHECK THE DATE OF THE DECISION, DAVID, BUT REALLY I THINK WE ARE PROBABLY GOING TO LEAVE IT IN THE GENERAL TERM OF THE SOVIET ACTIONS IN ANGOLA. THEY SENT A GREAT QUANTITY OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE CUBAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE. WE HAVE --

Q. WAS THIS DECISION MADE -- YOU KNOW, THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN NOVEMBER -- FOR INSTANCE --

A. I AM NOT GOING TO SPECIFY A LEVEL, BUT THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS THAT THERE WAS A LOT OF SOVIET MILITARY EQUIP-MENT THAT WENT IN AFTER DECEMBER.

Q. WHAT DO YOU MEAN WHEN YOU ARE NOT GOING TO -- SEND --

Q. BOB, COULD YOU LOOK TOWARD FINDING OUT, AT LEAST A WEEK, WHEN THIS --

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A. I SAID I WILL LOOK INTO WHEN WE MADE THIS DECISION. I THINK IT WAS FAIRLY RECENT.

Q. WHO MADE THIS DECISION, AT WHAT LEVEL? WAS THE PRESIDENT INVOLVED? WAS IT A KISSINGER UNILATERAL THING? CAN YOU HELP US ON THAT?

A. IT IS AN ADMINISTRATION POSITION, BERNIE. I DO NOT THINK WE CUSTOMARILY INDICATE WHO MAKES VARIOUS DECISIONS.

A. DOES THIS DECISION ALSO AFFECT THE NEGOTIATIONS ON SALT?

WE WERE AT THE HEARING THIS MORNING AND THE SECRETARY

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GAVE NO INDICATION OF THAT. HE SAID, "WE ARE WAITING FOR A SOVIET RESPONSE."

A. THAT IS CORRECT.

Q. IF THERE IS A SOVIET RESPONSE, WILL WE TELL THEM WE ARE NOT READY TO NEGOTIATE?

A. NO.

I THINK I WAS ASKED THIS QUESTION YESTERDAY. WE ARE STILL WAITING A REPLY FROM THE SOVIET UNION TO OUR LATEST PROPOSAL. WE DO NOT VIEW THE SOVIET ACTIONS IN ANGOLA AS OF THE MAGNITUDE WHICH WOULD CAUSE US TO INTERRUPT THE SALT TALKS.

KEN.

Q. THIS TIMING THING BOTHERS ME SOMEWHAT, BOB. I HAVE THE FEELING THAT IF IT HADN'T BEEN DISCLOSED IN THE PAPER THIS MORNING THAT YOU WOULDN'T HAVE ANNOUNCED THIS TODAY. HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN PREPARED TO HAVE MADE THE STATEMENT IF WE HAD ASKED, FOR INSTANCE?

A. I WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN PREPARED YESTERDAY. I WAS NOT INFORMED.
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Q. WE ARE TOLD THIS BRIEFING PAPER HAS BEEN AROUND THE DEPARTMENT FOR A WEEK. IS THAT CORRECT?

A. I DO NOT KNOW THAT.

THE FACT OF THE MATTER WAS THAT EACH OF THESE THREE BODIES: THE FIRST ONE HAD NOT BEEN SCHEDULED SO THE TIME HAD NOT BEEN SET. THE SECOND HAD A DATE SOMETIME IN MARCH AND THE OTHER ONE WAS TENTATIVELY SET FOR MAY.

Q. CAN YOU TELL US WHETHER THIS IS THE LIMIT -- THESE THREE AFFAIRS?

A. I AM NOT GOING TO SAY.

Q. IN OTHER WORDS, THERE ARE OTHER THINGS GOING ON BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION, FOR INSTANCE, THE ATTEMPT TO COMPLETE A TEST BAN TREATY PACKAGE - IS THAT GOING TO BE AFFECTED?

A. THE ONLY THINGS THAT ARE AFFECTED SO FAR ARE THE ONES THAT I HAVE MENTIONED TODAY.

Q. CAN YOU DESCRIBE WHAT -- HOW THE DECISION WAS MADE,

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TO SAY, TAKE THESE THREE GROUPS AND NOTHING MORE SIGNIFICANT?

A. NO, I DO NOT THINK THAT I CAN PROVIDE --

A. -- AN EXPLANATION OF THAT.

Q. ARE YOU INCLUDING IN THIS -- YOU SAID IT SORT OF AMBIGUOUSLY: U.S.-SOVIET COMMERCIAL COMMISSION? IS THAT DEFINITELY GOING TO BE POSTPONED? HERE WHEN YOU FIRST SAID ONLY TWO GROUPS --

A. THAT WAS THE FIRST ONE. I SAID THE DATE FOR IT HAD NOT YET BEEN SCHEDULED. AND I ALSO SAID, I THINK, IT MAY PERHAPS BE HELD LATER IN THE YEAR.

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Q. YOU DID SAY IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN HELD EARLIER THIS YEAR.

BUT WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, BOB, IS IT THAT THIS IS LIMITED TO THESE THREE COMMISSIONS AND ANGOLA? IS OVERALL POLICY TOWARD THE SOVIET UNION AFFECTED? IS THERE ANY CHANGE, ANY SHIFT IN THE OVERALL POLICY?

A. I THINK, IN ANSWER TO MURREY'S QUESTION, I SAID THAT IN LIGHT OF THE SITUATION IN ANGOLA, WE COULD NOT CONDUCT OUR BUSINESS WITH THE SOVIET UNION AS USUAL. AND I HAVE INDICATED TODAY THREE DECISIONS THAT WE HAVE MADE.

Q. BOB, HOW LONG DOES THIS GO ON, NOW?

I MEAN WHEN DO WE FORGIVE THE SOVIETS FOR ANGOLA AND CONTINUE WITH WHAT USED TO BE THE NORMAL PACE?

A. I AM NOT IN A POSITION TO ANSWER THAT QUESTION.

Q. BOB, DOES THE POLITICAL CAMPAIGN HAVE ANY INFLUENCE ON THIS?

A. NO.

Q. THE CRITICISM THE PRESIDENT HAS BEEN TAKING FROM REAGAN AND JACKSON?

A. NO.

Q. THIS HAS NOT AFFECTED THE ADMINISTRATION AT ALL?

A. NO. THE REASON FOR THIS DECISION IS SOVIET ACTION

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IN ANGOLA. AND THAT COMES AS NO SURPRISE, OUR FEELINGS ABOUT THE SOVIET ACTIONS IN ANGOLA ARE WELL KNOWN.

Q. WERE THE SOVIETS INFORMED OF THE REASONS -- OR WHAT REASONS WERE THE SOVIETS GIVEN?

A. I AM NOT IN A POSITION TO DISCUSS U.S.-SOVIET
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DIPLOMATIC EXCHANGES.

Q. THE U.S. EMBASSY IN MOSCOW, THIS MORNING, GAVE AS THE REASON FOR THESE POSTPONEMENTS SIMPLY THAT MORE PREPARATORY WORK WAS REQUIRED.

WAS THAT DONE DELIBERATELY?

A. I AM NOT AWARE OF THE STATEMENT THE EMBASSY MADE IN MOSCOW.

Q. BOB, THE SECRETARY TESTIFIED FOR TWO AND A HALF HOURS THIS MORNING BEFORE THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE. THERE WAS NOT THE SLIGHTEST INFERENCE OF ANY SHIFT IN THE U.S. POSITION ON THE SOVIET UNION UP THERE. IN FACT, HE WAS EXPRESSLY ASKED BY SENATOR CASE IF THERE WERE NOT SOME MEASURES THE UNITED STATES COULD TAKE, SUCH AS CUTTING OFF GRAIN OR CUTTING OFF TECHNOLOGY, OR PUTTING SOME OTHER PRESSURES ON THE SOVIET UNION TO REGISTER ITS DISPLEASURE WITH THE SOVIET UNION.
THE SECRETA
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